

CLAIMS

1. An information providing method for a network, for providing, via a network, content that constitutes an entire body of information based on conditions that are defined in 5 advance, comprising the steps of:

generating a finite number of intermediate contents for content that corresponds to an entire body of information;

selecting at least one of said intermediate contents and providing information at a selected level.

10 2. The information providing method according to claim 1, wherein information contained in said content is employed as said intermediate content.

15 3. The information providing method according to claim 2, wherein information obtained by changing at least a part of said information included in said content is employed as said intermediate content.

20 4. The information providing method according to claim 3, wherein a condition determined in accordance with a request from a user is defined as said condition that is defined in advance.

5. The information providing method according to claim 4, wherein an intermediate content is selected at a level that corresponds to said condition determined in accordance with said request from said user.

6. The information providing method according to claim 5, wherein a condition for reducing or increasing the amount of information in said content is defined as said condition that is defined in advance.

5 7. The information providing method according to claim 6, wherein a condition for extracting an information type that represents said content is employed as said condition determined in advance.

8. The information providing method according to claim 7, 10 wherein price information is provided for said contents, and compensation information based on said price information is provided for each of said intermediate contents at said levels that are generated.

9. An information providing apparatus comprising:

15 storage means for storing content that constitutes an entire body of information;

connection means for connecting said content to a network so as to provide said content;

20 generation means for, based on a condition determined in advance, generating intermediate contents at a finite number of levels relative to said content; and

output means for selecting and outputting at least one of said intermediate contents.

10. The information providing apparatus according to claim 25 9, wherein said generation means employs information

included in said content to generate intermediate contents at a finite number of levels.

11. The information providing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said generation means employs information 5 obtained by changing at least a part of the information included in said content to generate intermediate contents at a finite number of levels.

12. The information providing apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said generation means includes input means for 10 receiving a request from said user, and a condition designated in accordance with said request is employed as said condition determined in advance.

13. The information providing apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said output means selects an intermediate 15 content at a level that corresponds to said condition designated in accordance with said request from said user.

14. The information providing apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said generation means generates said intermediate contents by defining, as said condition 20 determined in advance, a reduction or an increase in the amount of information contained by said content.

15. The information providing apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said generation means generates said intermediate contents by defining, as said condition

determined in advance, extraction of an information type that represents said content.

16. The information providing apparatus according to claim 15, further comprising:

5 price storage means for storing said content in correlation of with price information; and compensation means for providing compensation information that is based on said price information for each of said intermediate contents at said levels that are 10 generated.